



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 24, 2006  
Contact: Zach Lowe – (202) 224-0981

## **FEINGOLD RAISES CONCERNS OVER TREATMENT OF HMONG DURING VISIT TO THAILAND**

*Disappearance of Hmong Children, Hmong Refugee Issues Among Topics  
Discussed in Several Meetings with Thai Officials During Visit to Region*

Jakarta, Indonesia – During each of his meetings with Thai officials this week, Feingold discussed the importance of returning 27 Hmong, including 26 minors, to their families in Thailand. Last December, the 27 Hmong were sent to Laos by local Thai officials and they are currently unaccounted for in that country. Feingold urged the Thai and Laotian governments to immediately reunite these individuals with their families in Thailand and to permit the international community immediate access to them to ensure their well-being.

“I strongly encourage both sides to work together towards the quick and safe return of these children,” Feingold said. “They have now been separated from their families for almost 2 months and I urge both sides to resolve this situation as quickly as possible so these families can be reunited.”

Negotiations between Lao and Thai officials to return the children are ongoing. The Thai government has agreed to accept and facilitate the children’s return to their families. The Lao government has continued to push for additional conditions before they assist in locating the children within Laos and returning them to Thailand, most likely via a third party. In working with the Lao and Thai governments to resolve the situation, the U.S. has also requested that the Lao government allow international humanitarian organizations, such as UNICEF, access to the children to ensure their safety.

Feingold also expressed in the meetings his concern for the welfare of the Hmong remaining in Thailand who have legitimate claims to refugee status or do not have recognized legal status under Thai law. Feingold encouraged the Thai Government to seek comprehensive solutions in addressing these critical issues facing the Hmong population living in Thailand.